



**THE FEDERAL
REDISTRIBUTION
NORTHERN TERRITORY**

Public suggestion 6

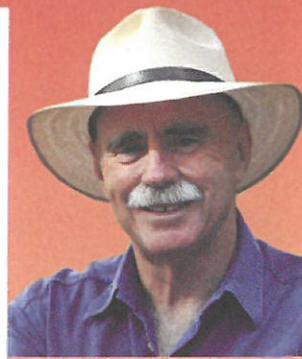
The Hon Warren Snowdon MP
on behalf of the Australian Labor Party

22 pages



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3 March 2016

Northern Territory Redistribution Committee
Australian Electoral Commission

**Re: Submission by Warren Snowdon MHR, Member for Lingiari on behalf of
the Australian Labor Party Northern Territory**

Please accept the following submission for the Northern Territory Redistribution.

Yours sincerely

Warren Snowdon MHR

Northern Territory (NT) federal redistribution

Submission by

Warren Snowdon MHR

Member for Lingiari

On behalf of the

Australian Labor Party

3 March 2016

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1. INTRODUCTION

This submission is made on behalf of the Northern Territory Branch of the Australian Labor Party. It argues that the Redistribution Committee, in proposing draft boundaries for the two electoral divisions of the Northern Territory, should contemplate a proposal to create two new electorates that are broadly geographically and demographically similar. This was the proposal of the Australian Labor Party in the previous redistribution. One of the electorates would include the Indian Ocean Territories of Christmas and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

It is our contention that this can be done in a way which is fair and in accordance with the requirements of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918.

It is our submission that this can best be done by incorporating parts of Darwin and Alice Springs in both of the new electorates, using the Stuart Highway as a good rule of thumb for the division, with other towns on the Stuart Highway such as Tennant Creek and Katherine being in one electorate or the other. This would result in two electorates which are within the boundaries of the quota requirements provided for under section 65 of the Commonwealth Electoral Act, 1918.

Both of the new electorates would, under this proposal, share the identity and "community of interests" with similar "Territory" features in each electorate.

The intent of our submission is to offer a way towards equitable representation. Electorates sharing geographical areas of roughly similar size with similar demographics are certainly more equitable in the Northern Territory context than electorates divided, for instance, along city-country lines.

The current redistribution draws a line around Darwin and as much of Palmerston as necessary to satisfy the quota requirements, we contend that this is neither fair nor equitable. An area of 350 sq. km is, in a narrow sense, a lot easier to service than one of 1.3 million sq. km, whereas a fairer and more equitable geographical and demographic division offers a better chance of fairer representation. All voters in both electorates would have a similar level of access to their representatives and the members themselves would have to do roughly the same amount of work to cover the electorates effectively.

1.2. BACKGROUND

1.2.1 A cultural and historical perspective on the Northern Territory

For more than fifty thousand years the Aboriginal peoples of the Northern Territory lived off and cared for their lands according to sophisticated and well defined systems of law, economy and religion.

In the main the coastal peoples of the monsoonal North enjoyed mutually beneficial relationships with Makassan fishermen and traders from modern day Indonesia for perhaps a thousand years before the arrival of European explorers.

Explorers from South Australia were the first non-Indigenous visitors to Central Australia from the 1860's onwards. They were to be closely followed by pastoralists, missionaries and the so-called "Afghan" cameleers.

The South Australian Parliament had responsibility for the Territory's government until 1911 when stewardship passed to the Commonwealth where it remained until self-government in 1975.

It has always been a place of economic opportunism and most of its visitors, certainly in the early days, were chasing their share of its abundant natural resources: gold, precious and semi-precious metals; the fruits of the sea including not only fish but trepang, pearls and trochus. Various attempts were made to subdue the land to agricultural and pastoral enterprises including sheep, cattle, rice and in more recent time mangoes and Asian style vegetables. Some succeeded beyond their early proponent's wildest dreams, cattle and mangoes, whilst others, notably rice, were reduced to the category of historical pipe dreams.

World War 2 changed the Territory irrevocably. The penny finally dropped that the North had to be the focus of Australia's front line defence.

This change in defence thinking has been further developed in the decades following WW2, so much so that more than ten thousand soldiers, sailors and airmen and women and the families now call the Territory home.

The development of highly sophisticated defence infrastructure like Tindal RAAF base near Katherine, Robertson Barracks near Palmerston, and Larrakeyah Naval Base in the Darwin CBD has been supplemented by world class defence training facilities like Bradshaw, and Mount Bundy.

Above and beyond the many thousands of Australian defence personnel who take advantage of these facilities, so do those of the United States of America, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and even the People's Liberation Army of China.

Territory mining and pastoralism continue to be substantial generators of export income for Australia as does the growth in environmental and 'adventure' tourism.

The stunning growth in student numbers at the Territory's major tertiary education institution, Charles Darwin University, is due in no small part to large numbers of overseas students studying there.

The failure of the Northern Territory to progress to statehood means that Territory legislation may be overturned by the Federal Parliament as has occurred most notably with the Territory Parliament's euthanasia legislation.

This places a particularly heavy responsibility on Territory Federal Members who must balance the need to provide effective representation for their Territory constituents with the added responsibility for acting in accord with Commonwealth law and Australia's international obligations.

Perhaps the single most defining characteristic of the modern day Northern Territory is multi-culturalism. All of Australia calls itself multi-cultural but nowhere else is it more abundantly apparent than in the NT.

Australia's First People continue to live on their lands in rural and remote areas and work hard to maintain their languages and culture despite more than one hundred years of Government funded attempts to assimilate them.

The cities and towns are homes to extended Aboriginal families who contribute prominently in the economic, cultural, sporting and social lives of the Territory.

Their neighbours are likely to be from somewhere else in Australia or more likely from overseas.

The Territory has always attracted immigrants from the earliest days of settlement. The cook on the first ship to arrive in Darwin Harbour in 1867 was a Greek.

He was followed by large numbers of Hakka, Teochew, Cantonese and other Chinese largely in search of gold. Some found it, most did not but stayed any way and took up work in horticulture and small business.

Darwin has had three Chinese mayors of Chinese origin including the present day incumbent.

There have been waves of Greek immigrants beginning in the 1920's often coinciding with political turmoil in the eastern Mediterranean. The largest group making up about half of all Greek immigrants come from the small Dodecanese island of Kalymnos.

The end of the Vietnam War heralded large numbers of Vietnamese, Khmer and Lao immigrants, many of whom who settled in the North developing farms that are largely responsible for the spectacular growth in the Asian vegetable market.

Immigration has not been confined to these groups however. In forty-seven per cent of Darwin households English is spoken as a second, third or fourth language. There are more than fifty-six separately identified national groups resident in the NT today.

Recent political turmoil overseas has led to substantial East Timorese immigration and in most recent times to substantial African, Nepalese and Burmese communities.

Recent immigration policy that favours regional settlement options means that even Tennant Creek, Katherine and Alice Springs have substantial immigrant communities now. Cricket which had been moribund in Tennant Creek for more than twenty years now thrives again largely because of a substantial South Asian community now resident there.

What unites these disparate groups of people is their shared sense of identity as Territorians – not just Darwin or Alice people, not just Aboriginal, Somalian or Lao Australians. This identity is not owned by any one group of people.

It is an expression like 'Us Territory mob' that unites us.

It is us who know what it is like to raise our children and bury our dead here.

It is a proud acknowledgement that we have pride in our NT, that we know who we are and we have substantial interests in common.

This 'community of interest' struggles to survive the so-called 'Berrimah Line', a perception that the vast bulk of Federal and Territory Government funding – still a major factor in the Territory economy

– is lavished on the well to do northern suburbs of Darwin while the remainder of the Territory suffers in comparison.

However the simple fact is that Darwin is the administrative, commercial and services hub as well as the government capital of the Northern Territory.

The spectacular recent economic growth in the capital has further exacerbated a perception of Darwin versus the Rest. This perception, whether true or not does not set a positive direction for the future of the Territory as a whole. It fails to accept that as far as the rest of Australia is concerned, we here are all connected through a particular and unique identity whether we live in Elliott, Borroloola, Alice Springs or Darwin.

The question of identity and shared common interest is always at the heart of debate about our political future. We voted against Statehood not because we opposed it, but because we didn't like the proposed model and its likely impact on our shared identity. We said to government this is not an inclusive model, go away and get it right.

Similarly the issue of redistribution must be approached in a way that gives full recognition of our unique identity and to the way we define our 'community of interest'. The Territory's history is more apparent and immediate to all of us and we can see how different it is from the other post-colonial States and Territories of Australia.

We want our shared difference acknowledged, not from narrow parochial chauvinism but from a recognition that we wish to test new boundaries in developing a new political identity for the 21st Century.

It is important to note that the Indian Ocean Territories are included in the present electoral division of Lingiari.

Like the Territory Christmas and the Cocos Islands have a shared 'community of interest' in that, like the Territory they are far flung settlements with a high degree of social and economic disadvantage.

It is our view that these observations remain relevant and pertinent. These communities like the Territory have unique multi-cultural populations that mean they share much of our 'community of interest' and as such should retain a continued association with future Northern Territory Federal electorates.

1.2.2 The Redistribution

This is the second redistribution of the Northern Territory. As the Federal seat of the Northern Territory one electorate served the people of the Northern for 30 elections between 1922 and 1998. Steady population growth throughout the Territory made the redistribution necessary to ensure equitable representation for Territorians at the Federal level.

At the election in 2001 the electorates of Lingiari and Solomon were established. The Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands were included in Lingiari.

This submission agrees with the view expressed by the NT Department of Treasury and Finance that 'Population growth in the Territory is significantly more volatile than Australian population growth,

largely reflecting the impact of major projects on the Territory's interstate and overseas migration.' Examples of this include the defence build-up in the 1990's and the construction of major energy infrastructure in the Top End in recent years.

In summary this submission agrees with the Department's view:

'The contribution of natural increase (births less deaths) to the Territory's annual population growth is about double that of the national percentage contribution.' This can be attributed to the higher fertility rate among Territory indigenous and non-indigenous women which favours child bearing ages compared to other jurisdictions.

Territorians have a lower life expectancy than people in other jurisdictions, largely the result of a high prevalence and early onset of chronic disease.

The net overseas migration is subject to labour demand and skill shortages in major projects and Commonwealth migration policy. Its contribution is variable but is net positive in most years.

There are significant fluctuations in the Territory annual population growth rate due largely to variations in interstate migration in and out of the Territory. Interstate migration typically has been a detractor from growth, with positive interstate migration occurring only for short periods of time, in response to major projects and other activities that increase demand for labour, particularly in the construction sector.

The Territory's Aboriginal population, while highly mobile, typically moves between communities and major centres in the Northern Territory and places straddling the NT borders with Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. It remains a stable population living within the NT.

The Indian Ocean Territories of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands are included in the Northern Territory for inclusion in an electoral division. At the last redistribution these Territories were included in Lingiari.

On Christmas Island, there has been volatility in population growth due mainly to the demands for staff at the Christmas Island Immigration Processing Centre. Another factor that will impact on the population of Christmas Island is the life of the islands phosphate mining operation into the future. In recent years the population of Christmas Island has fluctuated between 1800-2400 persons. The Cocos (Keeling) Islands has a relatively stable population (600) but any increase can be attributed to natural increase which is putting pressure on the limited natural resources of the islands (water and land).

A central tenet of this submission is the view that "Territorians" see themselves as different from their sisters and brothers elsewhere in Australia. There is a strong identification with the Territory lifestyle that is based around the ethos of the great outdoors, access to the bush, Territory individualism and the ability of a diverse population to live harmoniously together. This lifestyle identification is an attribute that Territorians regard as being basic and shared between them.

There is, in the Territory, a very strong and dependent relationship between the two major centres, Darwin and Alice Springs and between them and the rest of the community. This functional dependence defines the underlying rationale of our boundary suggestions.

At the same time, there is within the Territory community outside of Darwin a cynical view, the Territory has been subjected to an imaginary line of division that has been colloquially known as the "Berrimah Line" or more recently the "Palmerston Line." People who live outside Darwin use this half-humorously to contend that the bulk of funding and resources in the Northern Territory remains within a 30km radius of Darwin.

The view that Darwin always gets the best of attention while the rest of the Territory misses out means there is outside of Darwin a great deal of suspicion - and often concern expressed - about decisions made by the Northern Territory Government.

In fact this cynical view reflects the dependency that Territory residents outside the Darwin area actually have on Darwin and the services and social and physical infrastructure that it has. It reflects the reality of the critical mass that Darwin provides for the development of infrastructure that is for the benefit of the whole Territory population and not just for the people of Darwin. For example, sporting infrastructure of international competition standard such as have been developed at Marrara, could not be replicated throughout the Northern Territory.

Of course Commonwealth resources, so crucial to the funding of these services and the infrastructure, are founded on the needs of all Territorians and not just Darwin residents. This is precisely why they should be seen as being provided for the whole of the Territory, rather than solely for Darwin.

A similar argument prevails for the services and infrastructure in the other major urban and regional centre, Alice Springs. To the extent that these are not available in other Central Australian communities, they are regional services and infrastructure and not identified only with the needs of the Alice Springs urban area.

The establishment of the electorates of Solomon in Darwin and Palmerston, whilst the remainder of the Territory and the Indian Ocean Territories became Lingiari created an urban-based and regional remote seat. Such an arrangement, created a great deal of scepticism by those Territorians who live outside of Darwin that remains to this day. They still regard the arrangement as confirmation of their "second class" status, with those north of the Berrimah/Palmerston Line corralling resources that should be -and should be seen to be - for the benefit of the whole Territory. The arrangement is seen as sublimating the broader Territory interests to the political convenience of Darwin.

Our submission remains that such a division of the Territory electorates is unfair and divisive.

It is our strong view that the proposed boundary should reflect the "Territory" identity and aspirations and, for electoral purposes, treat all Territorians the same. Our proposal for the electoral boundary achieves this result and meets the requirements of the Electoral Act.

2. COMMUNITY OF INTEREST

We understand and acknowledge that "community of interests," and other qualitative criteria in paragraph 3(b) of section 66 are legally subordinate to the numerical criteria (within 10% of the State or Territory quota, and within 3.5% of average Divisional enrolment 3.5 years after the redistribution takes place).

We are also conscious of the lack of any widely accepted meaning of “community of interests,” and have been unable to find a legal definition given by a court to the term. Nor is there any kind of administrative or working definition -even in the Act itself - that might assist with our interpretation of the concept.

With this uncertainty as to what the term means our submission seeks to provide an interpretation that we believe fairly and accurately depicts the unique and binding features of the Northern Territory and justifies the dividing of the Seat of the Northern Territory in the way proposed in this submission.

This submission asserts that a working definition of "community of interests" should be cognisant of and accommodate the complexities of life in the Northern Territory. It says that the Territory has more than one focus: Darwin being a Territory-wide focal point and Alice Springs being the major regional focal point.

What also needs to be taken into account is the limited role local government plays in people’s lives and the lack of access of many Territorians in remote areas to conventional forms of local government. This has recently been highlighted by media reports across regarding housing in remote communities, where lines of communication between local authorities in communities, the NT Government Departments of Housing and Local Government and contractors responsible for service delivery are tardy and not responsive. This reduces both their levels of representation and their ability to monitor the making of decisions that affect their lives. It underpins the significance of the unique role of the Northern Territory as a Territory and not as a State.

This interpretation is centred on the notion of functional dependence. We argue that in the Northern Territory context this means there is a strong interrelationship and interdependence between the major urban centres of Darwin and Alice Springs and the rest of the Northern Territory.

We also argue that while the NT is a large and disparate community, there is a strong identification with the Territory as a community and that this understanding implies acknowledgment and support of the 'mutual' relationship that exists across Territory communities including those in the Indian Ocean.

There is a shared identity among Territorians. This identity takes into account the diverse and multi-cultural nature of the Territory population and the disparate spread of communities and the vast range of circumstances in which people live.

Defining electoral boundaries in southern states often categorises "urban" and "rural" as distinctly different communities of interest. This submission argues that such a division in the Northern Territory is untenable given that the entire Northern Territory population has an economic and social dependence on Darwin as the centre of government, industry and administration to an extent that is unique in Australia.

We argue that both Northern Territory electorates need to include representation in Darwin and Alice Springs given the functional dependence of the Territory community on these two towns and on Darwin in particular. Both electorates should be as geographically and demographically similar as possible.

In considering this view of "community of interests" there are a number of social, economic and regional features of the Territory which require some understanding.

2.1 Population

The population of the Northern Territory as at February 2016 is estimated to be 253 330 (NT Department of Treasury and Finance) There are three features of the Territory's population that are evident. First the percentage of the population who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is high (29%) the highest of any State or Territory, with around 10% (ABS, 2015) Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the Northern Territory.

Second, a large number of people were aged less than 19 years (27.8%) compared to the national average of 25.1). And thirdly, the Territory continues to have a major multicultural influence with just under one in every five persons counted born overseas.

2.1.1 Population Distribution

Most people in the Northern Territory live in the five urban centres of:

Greater Darwin	55%
Alice Springs	17.7%%
Katherine	8.8%
Tennant Creek/Barkly	2.8%
Nhulunbuy/East Arnhem	2%

Regional projections produced by the NT Department of Treasury are that the Greater Darwin share of the total NT population is projected to increase from 55% to 57.9% in 2026. Other regions are expected to more or less maintain their current total share with some minor adjustments.

There is a marked difference between the distribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people between the electorates of Solomon and Lingiari. According to the 2011 Census, Lingiari's Indigenous population was 42% of the total electorate population compared with a figure of 9.58% in the electorate of Solomon. Nationally the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is 3% of the total.

The age structure of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Territory is indicative of a population with high birth rates but with low life expectancy. A steady decline in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in each age group after the age of 24 is evident. (For a summary, see Table 9 Comparison of 2014 Main Release Projections at years 2020 and 2030 in Northern Territory Populations Projections)

2.2 Public administration and governance

The seat of government for the Northern Territory is Darwin; the major regional administrative centre outside of Darwin is Alice Springs. Every single community in the Northern Territory has either a direct or indirect administrative relationship with Darwin.

Commonwealth Departmental head offices for the Territory are all based in Darwin, the major regional centre outside of Darwin for the delivery of Commonwealth services being Alice Springs, but this has decreased since the previous redistribution.

Government decisions on the allocation of resources for the provision of both capital and recurrent funding to and between communities in the Territory are in most instances generated from Darwin. While there is some delegation of administrative decisions to regional offices the ultimate decision making responsibility rests, in the case of decisions from the Territory Government, in Darwin. Commonwealth decisions ultimately rest in Canberra on advice from the senior departmental officer in the Territory, who will usually be the equivalent of a State Manager.

The Northern Territory Government receives Commonwealth general purpose payments based on a formula developed by the Commonwealth Grants Commission.

The Grants Commission has as its central task:

The Commonwealth Grants Commission recommends how the revenues raised from the Goods and Service Tax (GST) should be distributed to the States and Territories to achieve fiscal equalisation (HFE).

It is an independent statutory body which responds to request sent to it by the Commonwealth Treasurer. It makes its recommendations in consultation with the States and Territories and based on data provided by them and independent statistical sources.

It therefore determines the most equitable method for distributing Commonwealth general purpose expenditure to all States and Territories on the principle that: "...each State should be given the capacity to provide the average standard of State-type public services, assuming it does so at an average level of operational efficiency and makes an average effort to raise revenue from its own sources."

In contemplating the needs of the Northern Territory the Grants Commission has regard to the arguments made by the Northern Territory Government that it costs more to deliver services in the Northern Territory than other parts of Australia. Indeed in making its submissions the Northern Territory properly seeks to differentiate its functions from the other States and the ACT by highlighting the special costs of providing services in the Territory, particularly the costs of delivering services to communities outside of Darwin and especially to Aboriginal communities.

The Territory Government repeatedly argues to justify the need for differential treatment in its submissions to the Grants Commission. Despite these arguments, the general purpose financial assistance grants, including the main operating grants recommended in accordance with the Commonwealth Grants Commission Act 1973, are untied. This allows the Territory government to spend this income as it pleases.

This is a source of some irritation as the many remote communities argue that, despite the Northern Territory obtaining additional funding on the basis of their disadvantage, they experience service levels far below their counterparts in the major urban areas, particularly Darwin. They are dependent on services provided in or from the major urban centres with minimal local input.

One of the oddities of the Northern Territory is its almost complete dependency on a public health system. This system is funded by Commonwealth grants and through Medicare. While services in Darwin and Alice Springs have improved considerably since the previous redistribution it remains the case that many remote communities, totally reliant on public health facilities and federally funded Aboriginal Health Services are not so well served.

Another unusual feature of Northern Territory governance is the extent to which Government agencies provide services that elsewhere is the responsibility of local government.

Territory Health provides all environmental health monitoring and regulatory functions for the entire Territory from Darwin and Alice Springs; Similarly, the Territory Government's proposed reforms to land use planning legislation have attracted widespread criticism precisely because they minimise local community involvement and place too great an emphasis on Ministerial (in other words Darwin- based) discretion.

The Indian Ocean Territories have shire councils on both Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. State type services are provided Service Delivery Agreements (SDA's) delivered by the Western Australian Government by agreement with the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development.

2.2.1 Territory centralism

A study of Northern Territory Government Departments and Agencies reveals that they have a regional branch structure with plans, programs and activities that operate across the Territory. Policy oversight and direction, however, is centred on Darwin. Given the large size and small population of the Territory it is difficult for regional operations of government services to develop economies of scale so their activities remain centred on Darwin. This is in contrast to regional branches of state government in other states that have very self-reliant regional centres that are less dependent on the 'head office' to manage their regions.

The larger NT Government Departments have regional directorates in Darwin, Katherine, East Arnhem, Barkly and Southern (based in Alice Springs). Smaller Agencies have a north south presence. For some government services residents outside of Darwin rely on an internet, email, phone service to a Darwin based agency. The greater use of communication technology since the last redistribution makes it increasingly possible to administer government services from Darwin.

As well as these government departments serving regional areas of the Northern Territory, there are a number of initiatives that involve bi-partite or tri-partite service agreements with regional councils and other bodies such as the Commonwealth and service providers.

In the Northern Territory, to most effectively service constituents of an electorate each Federal member needs avenues of communication between all operations of Federal, state and local government that exist in their electorate, as well as with constituents. This means the interests of Territorians outside of Darwin are best served if both members have an electorate that includes a Darwin base.

A deeper understanding of the networks and structures that provide services to all the regions in the electorate ensures more efficient management of time and energies and more effective representation.

2.2.2 Land matters

Another unique feature of the governance Northern Territory is that land tenure operates under both Commonwealth and Territory Government regimes. The NT Government regulates freehold and leasehold land in the conventional way.

But Aboriginal statutory bodies (the Land Councils) carry out major administrative responsibilities for land held by Aboriginal Land Trusts under the provisions of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, which was legislation passed by the Fraser Government through Federal Parliament.

Northern and Central Land Councils are the two major bodies, each taking responsibility for half the mainland Northern Territory on a rough NW-SE division from south of the Victoria River, through to the south of Elliott and to the north of Alpururulam (Lake Nash) near the Queensland border. They are based in Darwin and Alice Springs respectively, but have a network of regional offices that complements an elected council structure to accommodate regional cultural differences.

Two smaller land councils service the island communities of Groote Eylandt (Anindilyakwa Land Council) and Bathurst and Melville Islands (Tiwi Land Council).

Darwin and Alice Springs, while remaining the centre of administrative and legal activity, are of a lesser significance to many Aboriginal landowners than their more immediate regional centre and, of course, their land itself.

The Land Councils are a focal point of land-based activity. One of the aims of the Land Rights Act is to allow for the return of land to traditional owners. Once the Act received Assent, all former Reserve lands were "scheduled" and handed to Land Trust representing regional or local groupings of traditional owners. Under this arrangement about 19% of the Territory land mass became Aboriginal freehold land.

The Act also allowed for Crown Land (and specifically not leasehold or other, more conventional forms of freehold or even Crown Land being used for public purposes) to be claimed under a judicial claims process. This has resulted in a further 23% of the landmass being transferred to Aboriginal freehold title. All land under this title is inalienable: it cannot be bought, sold or even resumed unless there is an overriding national interest that is being served.

As Groote Eylandt and Bathurst and Melville Islands were handed back in their entirety as former reserves, their two land councils have not been involved in the land claims process.

The bulk of the remaining land is Crown Land held under pastoral leasehold, with less than two per cent - and that mainly in the urban centres - held under conventional freehold title.

As well as accommodating Aboriginal land interests, the Land Right Act covers control of access to Aboriginal land and sets out guidelines for the development of its resources. Aboriginal land is in fact a major contributor to the Northern Territory economy. More than 80% of the total value of

mineral resource development in the Territory derives from mines on Aboriginal land, for which the landowners receive a statutory royalty equivalent payment. The Territory's major tourist attractions - Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Kings Canyon, Nitmiluk and Kakadu - are all on Aboriginal land.

Clearly, the interests of Aboriginal peoples, who are regionalised to a far greater extent than non-Aboriginal Territorians, must be a significant consideration in this redistribution. It is important that the process does not set up a divide on cultural as well as geographical and demographical grounds.

2.3 Health

The major Territory hospitals are situated in Darwin and Alice Springs. Royal Darwin Hospital is considered the leading hospital, although people requiring intensive and/or specialised treatment may be sent to South-eastern city hospitals. There is a private hospital in Darwin. There are also three smaller regional hospitals or community-based health centres, which may or may not be adequately staffed or otherwise resourced. Territory residents who do not live in the two major centres have ready access to air medical evacuation services to Darwin or Alice Springs, either through the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) or Territory Health's Aero Medical Service.

Alice Springs and Darwin are also the major treatment centres for kidney dialysis, although there are community-based services in the Tiwi Islands, Katherine Tennant Creek and remote services to several communities in Central Australia.

The Indian Ocean Territories have their own health service funded directly by the Commonwealth.

2.4 Education

Darwin is the home of the Territory's major tertiary institution, the Charles Darwin University (CDU). This university provides distance education facilities in a range of courses for students who because of where they live are unable to attend the university campus for lectures. Since the previously redistribution there has been a revolution in remote delivery services. Real time interactive lectures and tutorials, access to groups study networks online and student cross communication via facebook as well as the formal networks of the university is now the norm.

The CDU provides tertiary and vocational education courses on sites outside of Darwin and has campuses in all major regional centres of the Territory.

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) offers tertiary and vocational education course to Indigenous people from throughout the Northern Territory and interstate. The Institute is based on the Batchelor campus, 100km south of Darwin, but has campuses or study centres in Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs and community-based lecturers.

Primary education is widespread, although there is the perception –justifiable in many cases -that remote community schools are extremely poorly resourced compared with those in Darwin. This gap occurs despite additional Commonwealth funding being available for remote Aboriginal community education.

Territory school students who live in remote communities or on pastoral leases do not have access to standard high school facilities and have to live in hostels or school boarding facilities away from their home communities. Some may use School of the Air, which operates out of Alice Springs and

Katherine. Hostels in Tennant Creek and Katherine and boarding schools in Darwin and Alice Springs cater for more than 700 students from around the Northern Territory, principally from remote Aboriginal communities.

Under the current redistribution the electorate of Solomon has approximately 50 schools, both Government and Independent whilst Lingiari has 150 schools. Many of the schools in Lingiari are small schools in remote communities.

Schools in the Indian Ocean Territories are provided by the Western Australian Education Department under a Service Delivery Agreement with the Commonwealth.

2.5 Business, Industry and Employment

The great majority of business is located in Darwin (78.2%), with smaller segments in Alice Springs (6.6%) and Katherine (5.3%). (Northern Territory Economy Snapshot 4 February 2016). Surprisingly employment is more balanced. The census of 2011 before the construction boom in Darwin indicated that the total labour force was 48 015 in Lingiari and 56 234 in Solomon.

2.6 Tourism

The Northern Territory contains many nationally and internationally renowned tourist attractions, including Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Kakadu, Nitmiluk and Litchfield national parks. Their unique environments are complemented by the Northern Territory's rich and varied Indigenous cultural heritage to create tourist drawcards.

The majority of these attractions are located outside the Darwin Palmerston region.

According to the Tourism NT Corporate Website combined international and domestic visitor results for the year ending June 2015, indicated increases were experienced across the Top End (up 2.0% to 415,000 holiday visitors) and Central Australia (up 18% to 396,000 holiday visitors).

Darwin remained steady with a 0.3% decrease in combined holiday visitors to 327,000. Kakadu, Arnhem increased to 107,000, while Katherine Daly increased to 126,000. Other increases were to Alice Springs, up 7.2% to 242,000, Uluru which was up 21% to 278,000 and the Barkly Region which increased to 59,000.

Whilst Alice Springs and Darwin are stepping off points it is clear that tourism in the NT is dominated by visits to places outside these centres.

This observation highlights the dependency of the Northern Territory economy generally, and the economies of Darwin and Alice Springs particularly, on tourists visiting Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Kakadu.

Significantly, both of these major attractions are in national parks on land leased back to the Commonwealth Government by their traditional owners under commonwealth law. They are also both managed by Boards comprising a majority of traditional owner representatives, a factor that enhances the interpretation of sensitive cultural material for visitors.

2.7 Recreation

Darwin and Alice Springs host the Territory's best sporting infrastructure. Darwin in particular hosts facilities of an international standard at Marrara. These facilities are used as the focus of Territory competition across a range of sports and host local, regional, national and international competition. In recent years Alice Springs has been able to host national and international events.

The hinterland is the focal point of holiday and recreational activity for most Territorians and is particularly important to the residents of Alice Springs and Darwin and the other major Territory towns. Recreational fishing is one of the most popular of recreational activities in the Territory and relies on access to the sea and waterways outside of Darwin. Issues relating to land use, management and access are of tremendous interest to Territorians generally.

3. COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT

3.1 Road, rail, air and sea

The Stuart Highway is a transport and communication spine that bisects the Northern Territory and links the Territory's major towns. Since the last redistribution the completed Alice Springs to Darwin railway also runs roughly parallel to the highway and passes through the major towns on route.

Along with the Arnhem Highway to Kakadu and the Jabiru-Pine Creek Road, it is the backbone of the Northern Territory's 6573 km of sealed roads. Roads off the major highways are generally gravel formed roads or unformed bush tracks. Major roads in the Northern Territory are funded by the Federal Government. The regional road network lacks a coherent funding policy.

Currently the Stuart Highway carries the vast majority of the freight task between southern centres and Darwin despite the advent of the railway.

A significant single item is cattle for the live export trade: close to 500 000 live cattle were exported through the port of Darwin in 2015 (NT Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries). These cattle come from pastoral properties across the Territory and travel to Darwin on the NT road network.

Parallel to the Stuart Highway and in close proximity to it, is a gas pipeline which is the major source of fuel for power generation for the Territory. Since the last redistribution there has been large scale gas development offshore to replace the gas supplies that originated to the West of Alice Springs.

3.1.2 Air

The major focal points of air traffic, both inbound and outbound and throughout the Territory are the Alice Springs and Darwin airports. Any Territorian wishing to travel interstate must go to one or the other. Darwin airport is the only airport that receives scheduled international traffic. Both of these airports are of fundamental importance to securing the future of the tourism industry Territory wide. Nearly three quarters of all visitors to the Northern Territory are fly-in visitors. There is significant government travel between Alice Springs and Darwin on a daily basis.

As the major airline routes comprise a spine and the major airports comprise international, national and regional hubs for transport, there has been steady growth in regional regular passenger transport (RPT) services.

Air freight services from Darwin and Alice Springs form a lifeline for many remote communities, particularly those inland, during the wet season. Without air services, there would be no fresh foods in these places.

3.1.3 Sea

The Darwin port facility is the destination for the bulk of Territory exports (apart from mining) and imports. In the case of exports the live cattle trade through Darwin harbour is vital to the prosperity of the Territory pastoral industry and to the Territory economy

Sixteen coastal and island communities are dependent on barges that originate from Darwin. There are outstations linked to every coastal community which are also dependent on the barge service. For example the barge to Nhulunbuy service not only the town itself but Yirrkala and, through Laynhapuy Homelands, more than 20 outstations. Other coastal focal points for major homeland activity are Galiwin'ku, Maningrida, Milingimbi and Numbulwar. The barges are the only form of freight transport for island communities, the only reliable and economical form of freight transport for coastal communities in the wet season and their major form of transport in the dry season. ' 1

3.2 Media and telecommunications

Since the last redistribution there has been a steady growth in alternative platforms for the delivery of news.

This has impacted on the traditional delivery of news via free to air television, (Again access to many more stations since the last redistribution.

Darwin and Alice Springs host the major broadcasting facilities in the Territory. The ABC has a radio and television broadcasting service covering the Territory from the two cities, but Territory based TV and radio stations are in a competitive market with other media outlets that now have reach into the Territory. There has been a dramatic increase in telecommunications available in remote communities with pay TV and access to the internet. The quality of the service depends on access to the NBN.

The Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association (TEABBA), which is Darwin-based, provides training, material and advocacy services as does the PAW Media Association in Central Australia. These community stations take national and Territory-wide feeds of news stories of specific Indigenous interest as well as covering local news and issues.

In Alice Springs, CAAMA radio performs a similar function through 10 community-based radio stations.

Darwin and Alice Springs are the focus of print media, with the exception of small local newsheets in Katherine, Tennant Creek, the Barkly and Nhulunbuy. Interstate newspapers generally arrive in Darwin and Alice Springs on the afternoon of the day they are published; other centres may wait a day or so.

4. PHYSICAL FEATURES AND AREA

The Northern Territory covers 1,347,525sq km. The Top End has major river systems on the east and west sides of the Stuart Highway and enjoys Dry (May to October) and Wet (October to May) seasons with local microclimatic variations and an arid centre that is nevertheless affected by summer monsoonal rains.

It is important to understand the impact of climate and climatic events in assessing the Northern Territory. In the wet season roads linking the Territory with Queensland and Western Australia have been cut by floodwaters.

The rail link can also be cut.

This highlights the importance of Alice Springs as a regional hub to feed Darwin in both literal and metaphorical senses. For bush communities, whose roads may be cut for several weeks during the Wet, Darwin and Alice Springs are again of extreme significance in providing an aerial lifeline.

The Northern Territory enjoys a variety of landform types, with sandstone ranges and outcrops throughout the Territory in both the tropic north and the arid central region. The Top End has monsoonal forest, swampland and scrublands, while the Centre has a variety of arid land characteristics, from desert to scrubby rangelands. The Centre has a number of seasonally dry rivers with immense catchments and of great antiquity.

No physical features, however, provide a logical dividing point for the two electorates. There are infrastructural physical features which divide the Northern Territory into two electorates such as the Stuart Highway, the railway corridor, gas pipeline and communications fibre optic cable which all divide the NT into east and west.

This submission proposes dividing the Northern Territory into two approximately equal electorates in terms of physical area, roughly approximating these infrastructural physical features, while still being within the enrolment quota for each division. It is possible to draw these boundaries using current Census district data to create two such electorates.

5. ENROLMENTS

According to the Australian Electoral Commission's own data, the number of electors enrolled in the Northern Territory at the end of the day in which redistribution commenced (15 October 2015) was 129 571 . The permissible maximum number of electors in a division is 71 264 and the permissible minimum is 58 308.

The total number of electors estimated to be enrolled at projection time (7 August 2020) is 141 376. The quota at projection time will be 70 688; A permissible maximum of 73 162; and a permissible minimum of 68 214.

6. BOUNDARIES OF EXISTING DIVISIONS

Currently the boundary between the electorates of Solomon and Lingiari is a line around Darwin and Palmerston. This submission provides an appendix with a suggestion of federal divisions straddling

down the Stuart Highway to the South Australia border based on the electorates of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly.

7. NAMES FOR THE NEW ELECTORATES

This submission proposes that the Northern Territory electorates remain named Lingiari and Solomon.

CONCLUSION

We believe that the redistribution presents the Australian Electoral Commission with a unique opportunity to define electoral boundaries that best suit the Northern and Indian Ocean Territories. We would like to re-emphasise that we believe the fairest way to divide the Territory into two divisions is to incorporate in both of them parts of Darwin and Alice Springs and take a line roughly along the Stuart Highway.

This creates electorates to the west and east of the Highway that are of comparable size and similar demographically. They will also share similar geographic features; and both members will face similar questions of dealing with distance and diversity.

Currently the Darwin-Palmerston region is one electorate, leaving the rest of the Territory as the second electorate. For all the reasons outlined in this submission -not least of which is the functional dependence of regional NT communities on the two major urban centres and on Darwin particularly for a variety of Government, business, trade and transport services-- we believe this is unsatisfactory.

On a personal note, Warren Snowdon, who has served both as a Member for the Northern Territory and as Member for Lingiari, is of the strongest view that our proposal is the fairest way of redistributing the Northern Territory. A Darwin-based seat would leave the representative of the "other" electorate to cover an impossibly large electorate. It is clear to us that all constituents deserve both the best possible service from their MHR and the most equitable arrangements for representation.

Currently the Member for Lingiari is not able to have an office in Darwin. It is the focal point of commercial, political and administrative activity in the Territory. Not being able to use Darwin as a base puts a strain on the ability of the member to service constituents that naturally use Darwin as their centre for shopping, sporting, medical and entertainment and other service needs.

Our case rests on an exploration of the reasons why the Northern Territory is different. These in turn supply a justification for the Northern Territory voters to be treated in a different -but nevertheless appropriately equitable -manner.

Appendix

Electorate 1

Electorate 2

NT division	*SAL 2	NT division	*SAL 2
Arafura	(small part of) Alligator; Tiwi Islands West Arnhem	Arnhem	(some of) Alligator Anindilyakwa (some of) Elsey & of Gulf
Araluen	Flynn; Larapinta Mount Johns	Barkly	Barkly; (some of) Elsey Tennant Creek
Casuarina	Brinkin-Nakara Tiwi	Braitling	Charles (most of) East Side
Daly	(some of) Alligator (most of) Daly Thamarrurr Weddell	Blain	(most of) Rosebery Woodroffe
Fannie Bay	(most of) Coconut Grove; Fannie Bay; East Point;	Brennan	Bakewell; (some of) Palmerston North; (small part of) Rosebery;
Johnston	(majority of) Alawa Jingili; Milner; Moil	** Cocos and Christmas Isl.	Christmas Island Cocos Island
Karama	Karama Malak	Drysdale	Driver; Gray; Moulden; (some of) Palmerston North;
Nelson	Howard Springs (some of) Litchfield) Durack-Marlow	Fong Lim	(some of) Ludmilla-Narrows (majority of) Woolner-(Bayview- Winnellie Stuart Park
Nightcliff	smaller part of Coconut Grove; Nightcliff; Rapid Creek	Goyder	Humpty Doo Koolpinyah Virginia
Sanderson	Anula; Marrara(major part) Wagaman; Wulagi	Katherine	Peterman Ross Sandover
Stuart	Victoria River Tanami Yuendumu-Anmatjere	Namatjira	East Arnhem Nhulunbuy
Wanguri	Buffalo Creek Leanyer; Lyons Wanguri	Nhulunbuy	(most of) East Arnhem Nhulunbuy
		Port Darwin	Larrakeyah Darwin City
		Spillett	Berrimah; Charles Darwin; East Arm; Ludmilla-Narrows Palmerston South Some of Woolner-Bayview- Winnellie some of Ludmilla-Narrows

*Most of the population of the Statistical Area Level 2's are in the NT electorate they are named against

** Not NT Divisions

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